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> The Editor's Podiumâ ¢

As we hail an end to January and 1/3 of the first quarter of 1990, what have we seen? Well for starters, the Lynx was very well received by those able to find and purchase this little jewel. The STE was warmly welcomed in all parts of the world except the USA, hmmmm another punch in the nose of the US Userbase. Whomever is allowing this continual insult and outrage to occur must go. Use the revolving door for some real good one time. Enough of this harping, everybody can see for themselves at this point as it is painfully obvious Sam and Atari apparently had NO intention of keeping any of the promises made at the very last online conference he merely told us what we wanted to hear. tsk.tsk.tsk.

The Lynx may very well carry Atari through 1990, now it appears that there are no less than eight LCD manufacturers wooing Atari for the deal to make them use in the Lynx. Six are reported to be mediocre and two are top quality. Anyone wanna take bets as to which is selected?

The new control panel (X) and its CPX modules should prove to push Atari and its software technology to the forefront of creativity and ease of use for the developer corps. Time will tell. In this issue we present an in depth overview of the NAMM show, and many other interesting and exclusive items of interest.

Thanks again for your strong support,

Ralph.....

ps; Next Week, the story behind FaST Technology....

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THE GENIE ATARI ST ROUNDTABLE - AN OVERVIEW

The Roundtable is an area of GENie specifically set aside for owners and

users of Atari ST computers, although all are welcome to participate.

There are three main sections to the Roundtable: the Bulletin Board, the Software Library and the Real Time Conference area.

The Bulletin Board contains messages from Roundtable members on a variety of Topics, organized under several Categories. These messages are all Open and available for all to read (GENie Mail should be used for private messages).

If you have a question, comment, hot rumor or an answer to someone else's question, the Bulletin Board is the place to share it.

The Software Library is where we keep the Public Domain software files that are available to all Roundtable members. You can 'download' any of these files to your own computer system by using a Terminal Program which uses the 'XMODEM' file-transfer method. You can also share your favorite Public Domain programs and files with other Roundtable members by 'uploading' them to the Software Library. Uploading on GENie is FREE, so you are encouraged to participate and help your Roundtable grow.

The Real Time Conference is an area where two or more Roundtable members may get together and 'talk' in 'real-time'. You can participate in organized conferences with special guests, drop in on our weekly Open Conference, or simply join in on an impromptu chat session. Unlike posting messages or Mail for other members to read at some later time, everyone in the Conference area can see what you type immediately, and can respond to you right away, in an 'electronic conversation'.

> CPU REPORTâ ¢
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Issue # 51

by Michael Arthur

Remember When....

In 1980, a newly formed company called Apollo Computer introduced the first workstation, the Domain DN100, with characteristics such as an integrated network and a \$60,000 price tag, and when, in 1982, Sun Microsystems introduced its first workstation, naming itself after the Stanford University Network terminal?

CPU Systems Roundupâ ¢ XXII
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Theories behind Graphical User Interfaces in Computers

In 1988, Tim Oren wrote a series of articles called the "Professional GEM" series, in order to teach aspiring ST GEM programmers needed tips on the internals of writing GEM Applications. In this essay, Tim Oren has provided a great source of knowledge about both the very ideas that GEM and Mac Finder are based on, and information that could be very helpful in designing User Interfaces for applications. His article is shown unchanged....

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Professional GEM by Tim Oren
Column #8 - User Interfaces, Homily #1

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

In response to a number of requests, this installment of ST PRO GEM will be devoted to examining a few of the principles of computer/human interface design, or "religion" as some would have it. I'm going to start with basic ergonomic laws, and try to draw some conclusions which are fairly specific to designing for the ST. If this article meets with general approval, further "homilies" may appear at irregular intervals as part of the ST PRO GEM series.

For those who did NOT ask for this topic, it seems fair to explain why your diet of hard-core technical information has been interrupted by a sermon! As a motivater, we might consider why some programs are said by reviewers to have a "hot" feel (and hence sell well!) while others are "confusing" or "boring".

Alan Kay has said that "user interface is theatre". I think we may be able to take it further, and suggest that a successful program works a bit of magic, persuading the user to suspend his disbelief and enter an imaginary world behind the screen, whether it is the mathematical world of a spreadsheet, or the land of Pacman pursued by ghosts.

A reader of a novel or science fiction story also suspends disbelief to participate in the work. Bad grammar and clumsy plotting by the author are jarring, and break down the illusion. Similarly, a programmer who fails to pay attention to making his interface fast and consistent will annoy the user, and distract him from whatever care has been lavished on the functional core of the program.

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Before launching into the discussion of user interface, I should mention that the general treatment and many of the specific research results are drawn from Card, Newell, and Moran's landmark book on the topic, which is cited at the end of the article. Any errors in interpretation and application to GEM and the ST are entirely my own, however.

FINGERTIPS

We'll start right at the user's fingers with the basic equation governing positioning of the mouse, Fitt's Law, which is given as

```
T = I * LOG2( D / S + .5)
```

where T is the amount of time to move to a target, D is the distance of the target from the current position, and S is the size of the target, stated in equivalent units. LOG2 is the base 2 (binary) logarithm function, and I is a proportionality constant, about 100 milliseconds per bit, which corresponds to the human's "clock rate" for making incremental movements.

We can squeeze an amazing amount of information out of this formula when attempting to speed up an interface. Since motion time goes up with distance, we should arrange the screen with the usual working area near the center, so the mouse will have to move a smaller distance on average from a selected object to a menu or panel. Likewise, any items which are usually used together should be placed together.

The most common operations will have the greater impact on speed, so they should be closest to the working area and perhaps larger than other icons or menu entries. If you want to have all other operations take about the same time, then the targets farthest from the working area should be larger, and those closer may be proportionately smaller.

Consider also the implications for dialogs. Small check boxes are out. Large buttons which are easy to hit are in. There should be ample space between selectable items to allow for positioning error. Dangerous options should be widely separated from common selections.

MUSCLES

Anyone who has used the ST Desktop for any period of time has probably noticed that his fingers now know where to find the File menu. This phenomenon is sometimes called "muscle memory", and its rate of onset is given by the Power Law of Practice:

$$T(n) = T(1) * n^{**(-a)}$$

where $T(n)$ is the time on the n th trial, $T(1)$ is the time on the first trial, and a is approximately 0.4. (I have appropriated $**$ from Fortran as an exponentiation operator, since C lacks one.)

This first thing to note about the Power Law is that it only works if a target stays in the same place! This should be a potent argument against rearranging icons, menus, or dialogs without some explicit request by the user. The time to hit a target which moves around arbitrarily will always be $T(1)$!

In many cases, the Power Law will also work for sequences of operations to even greater effect. If you are a touch typist, you can observe this effect by comparing how fast you can enter "the" in comparison to three random letters. We'll come back shortly to consider what we can do to encourage this phenomenon.

EYES

Just as fingers are the way the user sends data to the computer, so the eyes are his channel from the machine. The rate at which information may be passed to the user is determined by the "cycle

time" of his visual processor. Experimental results show that this time ranges between 50 and 200 milliseconds.

Events separated by 50 milliseconds or less are always perceived as a single event. Those separated by more than 200 milliseconds are always seen as separate. We can use these facts in optimizing user of the computer's power when driving the interface.

Suppose your application's interface contains an icon which should be inverted when the mouse passes over it. We now know that flipping it within one twentieth of a second is necessary and sufficient. Therefore, if a "first cut" at the program achieves this performance, there is no need for further optimization, unless you want to interleave other operations. If it falls short, it will be necessary to do some assembly coding to achieve a smooth feel.

On the other hand, two actions which you want to appear distinct or convey two different pieces of information must be separated by an absolute minimum of a fifth of a second, even assuming that they occur in an identical location on which the user's attention is already focused.

We are able to influence the visual processing rate within the 50 to 200 millisecond range by changing the intensity of the stimulus presented. This can be done with color, by flashing a target, or by more subtle enhancements such as bold face type. For instance, most people using GEM soon become accustomed to the "paper white" background of most windows and dialogs. A dialog which uses a reverse color scheme, white letters on black, is visually shocking in its starkness, and will immediately draw the user's eyes.

It should be quickly added that stimulus enhancement will only work when it unambiguously draws attention to the target. Three or four blinking objects scattered around the screen are confusing, and worse than no enhancement at all!

SHORT-TERM MEMORY

Both the information gathered by the eyes and movement commands on their way to the hand pass through short-term memory (also called working memory). The amount of information which can be held in short-term memory at any one time is limited. You can demonstrate this limit on yourself by attempting to type a sheet of random numbers by looking back and forth from the numbers to the screen. If you are like most people, you will be able to remember between five and nine numbers at a time. So universal is this finding that it is sometimes called "the magic number seven, plus or minus two".

This short-term capacity sets a limit on the number of choices which the user can be expected to grasp at once. It suggests that the number of independent choices in a menu, for instance, should be around seven, and never exceed nine. If this limit is violated, then the user will have to take several glances, with pauses to think, in order to make a choice.

CHUNKING

The effective capacity of short-term memory can be increased when several related items are mentally grouped as a "chunk". Humans automatically adopt this strategy to save themselves time. For

instance, random numbers had to be used instead of text in the example above, because people do not type their native language as individual characters. Instead, they combine the letters into words and remember these chunks instead. Put another way, the characters are no longer considered as individual choices.

A well designed interface should promote the use of chunking as a strategy by the user. One easy way is to gather together related options in a single place. This is one reason that like commands are grouped into a single menu which is hidden except for its title. If all of the menu options were "in the open", the user would be overwhelmed with dozens of alternatives at once. Instead, a "Show Info" command, for instance, becomes two chunks: pick File menu, then pick Show.

Sometimes the interface can accomplish the chunking for the user. Consider the difference between a slider bar in a GEM program, and a three digit entry field in a text mode application. Obviously, the GEM user has fewer decisions to make in order to set the associated variable.

THINK!

While we are puttering around trying to speed up the keyboard, the mouse, and the screen, the user is actually trying to get some work done. We need to back off now, and look at the ways of thinking, or cognitive processes, that go into accomplishing the job.

The user's goal may be to enter and edit a letter, to retrieve information from a database, or simply draw a picture, but it probably has very little to do with programming. In fact, the Problem Space Principle says that the task can be described as a set of states of knowledge, a set of operators and associated constraints for changing the states, and the knowledge to choose the appropriate operator, which resides in the user's head.

Those with a background in systems theory can consider this as a somewhat abstract, but straightforward, statement in terms of state variables and operators. A programmer might compare the knowledge states to the values of variables, the operators to arithmetic and logic operations, the constraints to the rules of syntax, and the user's knowledge to the algorithm embodied by a program.

ARE WE NOT MEN?

A rational person will try to attain his goals (get the job done) by changing the state of his problem space from its initial state to the goal state. The initial state, for instance, might be a blank word processor screen. The desired final state is to have a completed business letter on the screen.

The Rationality Principle says that the user's behavior in typing, mousing, and so on, can be explained by considering the tasks required to achieve the goal, the operators available to carry out the tasks, and the limitations on the user's knowledge, observations, and processing capacity. This sounds like the typical user of a computer program must spend a good deal of time scratching his head and wondering what to do next. In fact, one of Card and Moran's key results is that this is NOT what takes place.

What happens, in fact, is that the trained user strikes a sort of "modus vivendi" with his tool and adopts a set of repetitive, trained behavior patterns as the best way to get the job done. He may go so far as to ignore some functions of the program in order to set up a reliable pattern. What we are looking for is a way of measuring and predicting the "quality" of this trained behavior. Since using computers is a human endeavor, we should consider not only the speed with which the task is completed, but the degree of annoyance or pleasure associated with the process.

Card and Moran constructed a series of behavioral models which they called GOMS models, for Goals-Operators-Methods-Selection. These models suggested that in the training process the user learned to combine the basic operators in sequences (chunks!) which then became methods for reaching the goals. Then these first level methods might be combined again into second level methods, and so forth, as the learning progressed.

The GOMS models were tested in a lengthy series of trials at Xerox PARC using a variety of word processing software. (Among the subjects of these experiments were the inventors of the windowing methods used in GEM!) The results were again surprising: the level of detail in the models was really unimportant!

It turned out to be sufficient to merely count up the number of keystrokes, mouse movements, and thought intervals required by each task. After summing up all of the tasks, any extra time for the computer to respond, or the user to move his hands from keyboard to mouse, or eyes from screen to printed page is added in. This simplified version is called the Keystroke-Level Model.

As an example of the Keystroke Model, consider the task of changing a mistyped letter on the screen of a GEM word processor. This might be broken down as follows: 1) find the letter on the screen; 2) move hand to mouse; 3) point to letter; 4) click mouse button; 5) move hand to keyboard; 6) strike "Delete" key; 7) strike key for new character.

The sufficiency of the Keystroke Model is great news for our attempt to design faster interfaces. It says we can concentrate our efforts on minimizing the number of total actions to be taken, and making sure that each action is as fast as possible. We have already discussed some ways to speed up the mouse and keyboard actions, so let's now consider how to speed up the thought intervals, and cut the number of actions.

One way to cut down "think time" is to make sure that the capacity of short-term memory is not exceeded during the course of a task. For example, the fix-a-letter task described above required the user to remember 1) his place in the overall job of typing the document; 2) the task he is about to perform; 3) where the bad character appeared, and 4) what the new character was. When this total of items creeps toward seven, the user often loses his place and commits errors.

You can appreciate the ubiquity of this problem by considering how many times you have made mistakes nesting parentheses, or had to go back to count them, because too many things happened while typing the line to remember the nesting levels. The moral is that operations with long strings of operands should be avoided when designing an interface.

The single most important factor in making an interface comfortable to use is increasing its predictability, and decreasing the amount of indecision present at each step during a task. There is (inevitably) an Uncertainty Principle which relates the number of choices at each step to the associated time for thought:

```
T = I * LOG2 ( N + 1 )
```

where LOG2 is the binary logarithm function, N is the number of equally probable choices, and I is a constant of approximately 140 msec/bit. When the alternates are not equally probable, the function is more complex:

```
T = I * SUM-FOR-i-FROM-1-TO-N (P(i) * LOG2( 1 / P(i) + 1 ) )
```

where the P(i) are the probabilities of each of the choices (which must sum to one). (SUM-FOR-i... is the best I can do for a sigma operator on-line!) Those of you with some information theory background will recognize this formula as the entropy of the decision; we'll come back to that later.

So what can we learn from this hash? It turns out, as we might expect, that we can decrease the decision time by making some of the user's choices more probable than others. We do that by means of feedback cues from the interface.

The important of reliable, continuous meaningful feedback cannot be emphasized enough. It helps the beginner learn the system, and its predictability makes the program comfortable for the expert. Programs with no feedback, or unreliable cues, produce confusion, dissonance, and frustration in the user.

This principle is so important that I going to give several examples from common GEM practice. The Desktop provides several instances. When an object is selected and a menu drops down, only those choices which are legal for the object are in black. The others are dimmed to grey, and are therefore removed from the decision. When a pick is made from the menu, the bar entry remains black until the operation is complete, reassuring the user that the correct choice was made. In both the Desktop and the RCS, items which are double-clicked open up with a "zoom box" from the object, again showing that the right object was picked.

Other techniques are useful when operator icons are exposed on the screen. When an object is picked, the legal operations might be outlined, or the bad choices might be dimmed. If the screen flashing produced by this is objectionable, the legal icons can be made mouse sensitive, so they will "light up" when the cursor passes over - again showing the user which choices are legal.

The desire for feedback is so strong that it should be provided even while the computer is doing an operation on its own. The hour glass mouse form is a primitive example of this. More sophisticated are "progress indicators" such as animated thermometer bars, clocks, or text displays of the processing steps. The ST Desktop provides examples in the Format and Disk Copy functions. The purpose of all of

these is to reassure the user that the operation is progressing normally. Their lack can lead to amusing spectacles such as secretaries leaning over to hear if their disk drives are working!

Another commonly overlooked feature is error prevention and correction. Card and Moran's results showed that in order to go faster, people will tolerate error rates of up to 30% in their work. Any program which does not give a fast way to fix mistakes will be frustrating indeed!

The best way to cope with an error is to "make it didn't happen", to quote a common child's phrase. The same feedback methods discussed above are also effective in preventing the user from picking inappropriate combinations of objects and operations. Replacement of numeric type-ins with sliders or other visual controls eliminates the common "Range Error". The use of radio buttons prevents the user from picking incompatible options. When such techniques are used consistently, the beginner also gains confidence that he may explore the program without blundering into errors.

Once an error has occurred, the best solution is to have an "inverse operation" immediately available. For instance, the way to fix a bad character is to hit the backspace key. If a line is inadvertently deleted, there should be a way to restore it.

Sometimes the mechanics of providing true inverses are impractical, or end up cluttering the interface themselves. In these cases, a global "Undo" command should be provided to reverse the effect of the last operation, no matter what it was.

OF MODES AND BANDWIDTH

Now I am going to depart from the Card, Newell and Moran thread of discussion to consider how we can minimize the number of operations in a task by altering the modes of the interface. Although "no modes" has been a watchword of Macintosh developers, the term may need definition for Atarians.

Simply stated, a mode exists any time you cannot get to all of the capabilities of the program without taking some intermediate step. Familiar examples are old-style "menu-driven" programs, in which user must make selections from a number of nested menus in order to perform any operation. The options of any one menu are unavailable from the others.

Recall that the user is trying to accomplish work in his own problem space, by altering its states. A mode in the program adds additional states to the problem space, which he is forced to consider in order to get the job done. We might call an interface which is completely modeless "transparent", because it adds no states between the user and his work. One of the best examples of a transparent program is the 15-puzzle in the Macintosh desk accessory set. The problem space of rearranging the tiles is identical between the program and a physical puzzle.

Unfortunately, most programmers find themselves forced to put modes of some sort into their programs. These often arise due to technological limitations, such as memory space, screen "real estate", or performance limitations of peripherals. The question is how the modes can be made least offensive.

I will make the general claim that the frustration which a mode produces is directly proportional to the amount of the user's bandwidth which it consumes. In other words, we need to consider how many keystrokes, mouse clicks, eye movements, and so on, are going into manipulating the true problem states, and how many are being absorbed by the modes of the program. If the interface is wasting a large amount of the user's effort, it will be perceived as slow and annoying.

Here we can consider again the hierarchy of goals and methods which the user employs. When the mode is low in the hierarchy, and close to the user's "fingertips", it is encountered the most frequently. For instance, consider how frustrating it would be to have to hit a function key before typing in each character!

The "menu-driven" style of programs mentioned above are almost as bad, since usually only one piece of information is collected at each menu. Such a program becomes a labyrinth of states better suited to an adventure game!

The least offensive modes are found at the higher, goal related levels of the hierarchy. The better they align with changes in the state of the original problem, the more they are tolerated. For example, a word processing program might have one screen layout for program editing, another for writing letters, and yet another while printing the documents. A multi-function business package might have one set of menus for the spreadsheet, another for a graphing module, and a third for a database.

In some cases the problem solved by the program has convenient "fracture lines" which can be used to define the modes. An example in my own past is the RCS, where the editing of each type of resource tree forms its own mode, with each of the modes nested within the overall mode and problem of composing the entire resource tree.

TO DO IS TO BE!

Any narrative description of user interface is bound to be lacking. There is no way text can convey the vibrancy and tactile pleasure of a good interface, or the sullen boredom of a bad one. Therefore, I encourage you to experiment. Get out your favorite arcade game and see if you can spot some of the elements I have described. Dig into your slush pile for the most annoying program you have ever seen, run it and see if you can see mistakes. How would you fix them? Then... go do it to your own program!

AMEN...

This concludes the sermon. I'd like some Feedback as to whether you found this Boring Beyond Belief or Really Hot Stuff. If enough people are interested, homily number two will appear a few episodes from now. The very next installment of ST PRO GEM will go back to basics to explore VDI drawing primitives. In the meantime, you might investigate some of the Good Books on interface design referenced below.

REFERENCES

Stuart K. Card, Thomas P. Moran, and Allen Newell, THE PSYCHOLOGY

OF HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, New Jersey, 1983. (Fundamental and indispensable. The volume of experimental results make it weighty. The Good Parts are at the beginning and end.)

"Macintosh User Interface Guidelines", in INSIDE MACINTOSH, Apple Computer, Inc., 1984. (Yes, Atarians, we have something to learn here. Though not everything "translates", this is a fine piece of principled design work. Read and appreciate.)

James D. Foley, Victor L. Wallace, and Peggy Chan, "The Human Factors of Computer Graphics Interaction Techniques", IEEE Computer Graphics (CG & A), November 1984, pp. 13-48. (A good overview, including higher level topics which I have postponed to a later article. Excellent bibliography.)

J. D. Foley and A. Van Dam, FUNDAMENTALS OF INTERACTIVE COMPUTER GRAPHICS, Addison Wesley, 1984, Chapters 5 and 6. (If you can't get the article above, read this. If you are designing graphics apps, buy the whole book! Staggering bibliography.)

Ben Schneidermann, "Direct Manipulation: A Step Beyond Programming Languages", IEEE Computer, August 1983, pp. 57-69. (What do Pacman and Visicalc have in common? Schneidermann's analysis is vital to creating hot interfaces.

But ponder, if you will, this question:

- 1) What other potential applications exist for this research into optimal human/computer interaction with a user interface?

> BBS TERRORIST CPU/STR Spotlightâ ¢ The extremes a creep will go to....
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PROFILE OF A SICKIE

by Dana P. Jacobson

For over a year, three of Greater Boston's Atari bulletin boards have been pestered by a 'known' user who has been flooding the message bases with obscenities, threats, and fake names. For most of us who call bulletin boards; and especially those of us who run one, this is not "too" unusual. This case is a little more unusual however, because the user is extremely persistent in his endeavors. Most remote users of these systems have learned to, at least, try and ignore this person. The SysOps of these

boards (myself included) have worn out fingers hitting the delete key on his messages and fake accounts. This user has been deleted from just about every legitimate BBS in the area, and his hatred for this happening to him grows. Until recently, he has been resigned to the fact that he has to log on to boards under assumed names to keep active. Then, he decided to get revenge on those of us who originated his mass deletion from the area boards. As he put it, we were heading a conspiracy to ban him from all boards. Well, I have to admit, we were spreading the word about him wherever we saw his name. Conspiracy, no. There's an unwritten bond between SysOps to help each other protect the integrity of our boards, so this was a natural occurrence among us.

This "pest" finally got fed up with what was happening to him (HE got fed up - what about us?) and decided to retaliate. One of the last bulletin boards to delete this guy's account was BCS/Atari, run by Harry Steele. It was Harry's contention that if you left the guy alone, he'd go away. Well, as per normal, this user didn't go away and continued to leave abusive messages on the BBS. Users were complaining more than usual, so Harry reluctantly deleted the account. I happened to be online (BCS/Atari has 2 lines) when the person logged on after being deleted. He re-registered and Harry engaged him in Chat. Having WizOp access (we run MichTron BBS), I was able to "spy" on the chat discussion and find out what this user was up to. Without going into detail, the essence of the "discussion" ended with this user threatening to do something to make Harry sorry for deleting him. A few hours later, the three major Atari boards in the area were crashed, and the majority of files were deleted!

The next day, there was a message on another local BBS, from an individual calling himself the "Bbs Vigilante". In that message, he stated what he had done, and why. He then went on to state that until his "demands" were met (to be aired later), that this trashing would occur again. Needless to say, the three respective WizOps were speechless, and hurried to restore their boards. The phones were busy that day trying to reconstruct the events of the night before. Let me try and reconstruct the background leading up to this heinous destruction, starting back over a year ago.

I belong to the South Shore Atari Group (SSAG), since its "revival" just over two years ago. Kevin Champagne, owner of the newly opened Atari store, Computer Cache, talked to former SSAG members and offered to host the meetings. The members took him up on it, and SSAG was reformed. The old group had its own BBS, and Kevin offered the new group a discounted copy of MichTron BBS. The group bought it, and were back online as well as meeting regularly again. Since the SysOp of the former SSAG board allegedly had a "tainted" past, some of the members of the Steering Committee wanted access to the new BBS to "keep tabs" on it. Well, after a few months of access, we lost it. The SysOp felt "restricted" in his running the BBS, and wanted to do it his way without any "watchdogs". Heated discussions went on for a couple of months, and the committee requested that the BBS software be returned. Meanwhile, one of the ST SIG SysOps was our "friend, the pest", who at that time, was a typical active and regularly-contributing user on the boards.

To make the connections between this user and the "soon-to-be-defunct" SSAG board, we learned that this SysOp managed to make a copy of the board's userlog, containing among other info, the passwords of every user! I was given this info much later, by the person who ran the BBS, after the SSAG BBS was down, and tensions diminished among the parties involved. By the way, the BBS went down shortly after, and some of those who ran that board quit the group. Now that this SysOp didn't have

a BBS to "hang-out", he began to frequent the other Atari boards more often. On occasion, he'd log on under aliases, starting message threads that were anti-SSAG because of our involvement in that board going offline. Also, this past summer, Computer Cache closed its doors, adding more fuel to this user's anger - he now had no access to a nearby computer store; and he also blamed SSAG for the store's demise.

Now his activity on the local boards was increasing, and he had numerous phony accounts which we kept deleting. He also was using some of the former-SSAG board's accounts, to keep his anonymity. As we learned of these accounts, we deleted them. When he called under his real name, we cautioned him to act responsibly to retain his access. We warned him on numerous occasions, we restricted his time-limit, and finally deleted his "good" account. None of this kept him from calling and continuing his abuse of SSAG and the closing of the store. His tirades grew. When he lost one account, he'd create another. He called other boards and continued his tirade there. One by one, he lost most of his legitimate accounts, and many phony ones - still no end in sight, even now.

The old SSAG board was back on-line, under a different name now; and had no connection to the usergroup. Our frustrated user became a user there again, but was not made a SysOp again. The board went down a few months ago for personal reasons, and our user was again blaming that on SSAG. Just a short while ago, that board was back again, supposedly running on a pirated version of FoRem BBS. I have no idea if there is any validity to this, and the "source" of this information was, you guessed it, our "pal". The reason he told us, supposedly, was that the BBS was now a pirate board. Now, since Computer Cache was closed, and there were "no good" stores nearby, he resorted to piracy to obtain new software. He "snitched" on his local source because he even got himself dumped from there! He even called the author of FoRem to turn the board in (I thought there was "honor among thieves!"). Now this guy is really furious. He now has to call long-distance pirate boards to obtain his software! Again, I only know what this user has left in messages about the alleged local pirate board. I have talked voice with the person allegedly running that board, and he says no, not that he'd admit to running one, but he added he wasn't even up. I can't verify that information.

Now, our pest is running out of local sources for anything, public domain or pirated. He's left my bulletin board alone for awhile, and has resorted to calling the last three boards that he had legitimate access to. His comments, threats, etc. have not stopped however. He has continued to get even with those who have been conspiring against him, for giving him such a bad time (is this guy for real?).

On the evening of December 30th, I happened to log on to the BCS/Atari BBS while our "friend" was online. Having the access to do so, and being the curious type, I went to check up on what he was doing. Thanks to Tim Purves, author of the MichTron BBS, I was able to use a "screen-display" command which enabled me to actually "see" what he was doing. He was engaged in Chat with the SysOp, and I watched the conversation progress. The SysOp (Harry Steele) was telling the user that users were finally fed up with this guy's antics on the board, and his access was about to be taken away, again, only for good. The user complained that he was being wrongly treated, and pressure by the other users should not be used against him. Well, since the board is backed by the BCS, Harry was obligated to listen to its members. Our user didn't want to listen to reason. Personally, I don't think he's capable of reason! The discussion went on for a bit more, and finally the user threatened to get even, to make "us" pay for how we were treating him.

About 8:00 am the next morning (an ungodly hour for me on a Saturday morning!), I got a phone call from Harry. He told me to go check on my BBS (Toad Hall EBBS). I turned the monitor on, and was faced with the ST's desktop instead of the usual BBS's "call-waiting" screen. The first thing I thought to myself as I tried to wake up was that there was a power outage in the area that night, and Toad Hall got "hit". When I "clicked" on the BBS run program, I got that dreaded message to check the drive. Something was seriously wrong. I got back on the phone and discovered that not only was my BBS down, but so was BCS/Atari and Harbour Light BBS (the former in-house BBS of Computer Cache, now run elsewhere).

I asked Harry what happened, and he informed me that around 3:00 that morning, his wife was awakened by the BBS's hard drive making an unusual amount of noise so she went to investigate. She turned on the monitor and saw "me" deleting files from the hard drive! She knew "something" was wrong, so she hit the reset button to the ST. Apparently, someone had systematically deleted files from all three boards in the "darkness of the night.

The BCS/Atari board was fortunate that Mrs. Steele was awakened. The damage to that board was limited to one of two hard drives connected to the BBS. The culprit was "stopped" before he got to the second hard drive which wasn't backed-up at all. The affected drive was recently backed up a few days before the "attack". Harbour Light was also fortunate. That MichTron board is running on an IBM-clone, and the internal set-up was different from the Atari-run boards. The "terrorist" didn't know, or was unaware of how or where to look to find all the files. So, little damage was done, and back-ups of the system files and the affected downloads were relatively current as well. Toad Hall was hit the hardest. Just about every file on the 48-meg hard drive was deleted. All that remained were a few hard drive utility files, and a few other worthless ones. To make matters worse, the most current back-up of the system files and downloads were in an area of the hard drive which had a lot of available space, not on floppies. The most recent floppy back-up was from late-August, almost 4-month's old!

Well, all three boards were restored and back on-line by the end of the day. Once things were as back to "normal" as possible, we tried to piece together how this was accomplished, and who did it. The "who" was fairly obvious from the start. After seeing the messages on various boards in the area from the "Bbs Vigllante" (his spelling, not mine!) stating what was done, why, and further threats, we knew there was only one suspect: our disgruntled user. But how?

Well, we knew that he had the old SSAG userfile. Now all of the affected SysOps had been users on that board before the usergroup took back the software, almost a year ago. All of us had changed our passwords to be sure that the one we used on the SSAG board wasn't repeated elsewhere. Or did we? Apparently, one of the SysOps did not change his passwords (to keep from embarrassing that person, I won't reveal who, but it wasn't me!). Our Bbs Vigllante finally used his purloined userfile to call various boards, looking for one where that same user had high access. From there, he got WizOp access to all three boards, using one password to gain others. Once that access was his, the systematic deletion of the boards was simple. After seeing the additional threatening messages on other boards, two of us immediately downgraded all users with SysOp-access or higher, knowing that the Vigllante had copies of all three userlogs. One system didn't do so immediately, and subsequently was uploaded a pirate file which was downloaded twice before discovering it. We were

more concerned with getting the boards back to normal than checking out uploads. The file was subsequently deleted, and users on all three boards were told to change their passwords or expect that the possibility of their accounts to be misused was inevitable.

To this day, not all users have done so, so there is still a password abuse on all three boards. We're currently considering deleting the entire userlist and starting from scratch. This would be a drastic measure, and we're considering others. Our first concern was to protect our boards from similar "terrorism" and finding a way to bring the "Bbs Vigllante" to justice and end this abuse.

We voice-validated all high-access password changes. Those we couldn't contact are still "demoted" until we do so. Some of us have taken further precautions and enhanced our password menus to include secondary (or more) passwords. We've also tried to point out to, not only our users, but on other boards as well, that passwords should be changed regularly on every board a user calls; and not to use the same password on other boards. We learned what could happen, the hard way.

Meanwhile, the threats have continued. I've included a bunch of these messages captured in my term program's buffer for proof, should the opportunity be made available to use them against the vigllante. He's also resorted to "BBS extortion", making demands on the three trashed boards AND the SSAG. Briefly, these demands include: WizOp access on all three boards, a public apology for the way HE's been treated, and a monthly column in the SSAG Newsletter (non-edited)! If these demands aren't met, then we will be leaving ourselves open to similar, or worse, attacks.

Dana P. Jacobson
WizOp - Toad Hall EBBS
Boston, MA
617-567-8642

> BBS GRIEF CPU/STR Spotlightâ ª Boston Computer Society gets involved...
=====

FROM THE MIDDLESEX NEWS, FRAMINGHAM, 1/9/89
=====

A hacker, apparently using a year-old list of passwords, has managed to

crash three Atari-based computer bulletin-board systems in the Boston area and is now threatening to do the same to a fourth.

Calling himself the "BBS Vigilante," the hacker has, over the past two weeks, gained phone access to the internal operating systems of the three systems, one of them run by the Boston Computer Society. He has deleted hundreds of files, including scores of messages and programs left by users and even the software that runs the boards themselves.

Harry Steele, who runs the Boston Computer Society Atari board from his Medford home, said the hacker, using the purloined password of another system operator, cracked into his system early on Dec. 30. But around 3:15 a.m., he said, his wife was awakened because "she heard the hard drive going cuckoo." She turned on the monitor, saw what was happening and promptly shut the machine, he said, adding he was especially lucky because the hacker was deleting files on a disk drive he had backed up just a few days before - rather than a second drive that had about 400 programs he had never backed up. Still, Steele said it took him eight or nine hours to fully restore the roughly 20 megabytes of software the hacker did delete.

Toad Hall, an East Boston system, was not so lucky. Although the system operator there had backed up his files, he had done it on a section of his disk drive that the "Vigilante" managed to delete. Steele said the sysops strongly suspect the culprit is a teen-ager once involved in a BBS and club run by a now-defunct software store. As an active member, he was able to gain access to that BBSs' password list, of which he apparently made a copy.

When the store closed about a year ago, Steele said, he turned vicious, calling up Atari-based boards and leaving nasty messages for users. Faced with complaints from other users, the system operators kicked him off - something they had to do several times because he was using a number of assumed names.

What the board operators did not realize, Steele said, was that the list the kid had included some names and passwords of either system operators or "co-sysops," people who maintain conferences on the systems and who generally can gain entry into the system's internal programs over the phone lines.

In December, he threatened to take the systems down. Then, after he did, he left messages threatening to do it again. Steele said that if need be, he and the other operators can simply shut their systems down, delete their password files and then not give anyone access until they are contacted by telephone to ensure they are 'real.' One board, which the hacker has threatened to crash, now requires all users to send in a \$1 check with their name and telephone number on the back before they are given more than three minutes worth of access.

Steel also said the problem, beyond dealing with this kid, is that many people use the same password on all the systems they log onto, even though most systems ask them not to. If the sysops or co-sysops on the list had used different passwords on each system, the hacker might never have been able to gain access, he said.

Fred, the Middlesex News Computer, eagerly awaits your call. With a computer and modem, you can call him, any time, day or night, at: (508) 872-8461.

> NAMM 1990 CPU/STR FOCUSÂ ¢ Eyewitness Report NAMM Show...
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N.A.M.M. 1990
=====

by Mike Rosen and Eric Casteel

Flash!!!

For the first time in history, Roland Corp. U.S.A. is supporting the Atari ST with a BRAND NEW line of computer synthesizer modules and software! These modules are called the CM32L, CM32P and the CM64. These modules fit perfectly underneath any Atari monitor and are MIDI compatible with any MIDI keyboard or controller. In fact, the NEW Sierra On Line games support the CM32L. The software is called Artist and is developed by the same folks who brought you Pro-24 and Cubase, that's right; Steinberg. This software is geared for the novice and has very sharp graphical interfacing surprises. (I can feel a review comming on already!).

Passport Designs Inc. has a revolutionary new division called; Music Data. This new division makes a product that has songs on floppy disk in standard MIDI file format. These disks are smartly packaged in a compact audio disk case and range in all kinds of styles of music to satisfy every taste and desire in music appreciation.

Also, at NAMM, I was quite surprised to see the large quantity of STACY 4's. Most of the major publishers had them on display demonstrating their most current software. (Dr.T's had three of them!) Which by the way was wonderful since the Apple Laptop cannot handle midi software at all.

Digidesign demonstrated "Sound Tools for the MEGA 2 and 4". This is a hard disk sampler/recorder that has previously only been available for the Macintosh SE and Mac II. The Atari version will be available late march. Digidesign also showed C-Labs famous Notator SL, as well as their editor/librarians. Hybrid Arts is planning to come back strong this year with thier updated versions of the products that put them on the map. Also from Hybrid Arts, is the ADAPT II Hard Disk recording system that has done very well in Europe and is now getting much more attention in the USA.

Those fine folks from Dr.T's very proudly showed thier new hot seller Tiger Cub. This program gives you a great sequencer, graphic editing and

quickscore music notation for only \$99.00! Also showing at Dr.T's were KCS Level II 3.0 with quickscore, Copyist, Tiger, and XOR (Universal Editor/Librarian).

Steinberg was showing Cubase version 1.5 that features the new Dynamic MIDI manager. Also shown was the new editor/librarian for the EMU Systems Proteus. This editor/librarian supports M.ROS for a multi-tasking environment with Cubase. Speaking of multi-tasking, Intelligent Music showed a multi-tasking operating system that works in a GEM shell. This allows any TOS program to work in a multi-tasking environment!

Atari had, what could easily be deemed, office space in the upstairs portion of the convention center. Quite different a location from previous years. As a matter of fact, I had to ask four different people where to look just to find it, and even then, I walked right past the entrance! Once I got there however I was impressed. It looked very professional and the location was away from the noise, hustle and bustle that you so easily get used to putting up with after a couple of hours of walking around show's main floor. Atari featured the Hotz box and of course, had record producer/engineer Jimmy Hotz demonstrating it. Also featured was the Megafile 60 and the Megafile 30 removable media storage systems.

All this and much more will be reviewed and discussed in the March issue of ST World.

Mike Rosen
Eric Casteel

> WOA ANAHEIM STR FOCUSÂ ª The show must go on!

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WORLD OF ATARI SHOW -> ANAHEIM, CA.
=====

WORLD OF ATARI
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APRIL 7 & 8 1990

WORLD OF ATARI will be held at the Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim California, on April 7th and 8th. For Reservations, Car Rentals and Airline tickets, call: 1-800-842-9034. The hours of the show are 10 am till 6pm on Saturday, the 7th and on Sunday; 10am till 5pm. Admission is \$5.00 per day or \$7.00 for both days.

Atari Corporation will feature their full line of products. Of course, many of the companies we are all familiar with will be displaying their latest products.

Preliminary Exhibitor Listing;

Avant Garde	Best Electronics
Computer Games +	FAST TECHNOLOGY
LucasFilms Software	Maverick Creations
Megamax Inc.	MichTron Inc.
Mid-City Compu-Soft	Micro Creations
Sierra Online	Seymor/Radix
Softrek Marketing	Wuztech Inc.

plus many more...

<* - SPECIAL OFFER -*>

for the readers of CPU NewsWire/STReport

ST WORLD MAGAZINE has offered to the readers of our humble offering, an opportunity to enjoy their monthly publication, featuring such notables as Dave Small, Dr. Dave Brewton, Joe Speigel, Earl Hill, Bob Mulholland, George Miller, Milt Creighton, Brian Miller, Mike Rosen and of course, Larry Payne and Charlie Young.

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> pc ditto II (sigh) CPU/STR Spotlightâ¢ What's up Doc?  
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ctsy GEnie Atari RT

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AS THE THE CHIP FLIP-FLOPS  
=====
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C.HAGGERTY; posts...

Well, I might as well add my story to this tale of woe! I finally received PCDII today after nearly five months of waiting and checking this RT on a frequent basis. Unlike others, my unit appeared in good condition with all nessasary parts, and I had little problem in following AG's installation procedures. I might even be able to fit the board in my old 520ST with some modifications, but alas, My unit locks up after trying to boot DOS.

Usually I get 4 bombs, but occasionally it just freezes. Although I seem to have a good connection with the clip I may try soldering it tommorow to see if this will help. On a editorial note... During these long months I have followed discussions on the RT about PCDII with great interest. I have felt all along that AG had some difficulties beyound its control and would make it alright in the end. Now however, we see a product which simply does not work, wh ich AG knows not to work, continued to be shipped, apparently without regard for the user. Furthermore, since AG's last message over a week ago acknowledging the problem we've received no communication of any kind. Come on Bill! Would it kill you to take 5 min everyday or two to give us some idea on how it's going? Please take the time to help your users and save your reputation.

Craig H. Haggerty M.D.

E.BURGESS; posts,

Well it seems a few of them work ,so they arent all bad. Now if they can find out what the diff between the ones that work and the ones that dont they'll have the problem solved

Jan 24, 1990

W.C.JENKINS; posts,

Well, I got this piece of garbage in the mail today called "PCDittoII" No, mine is not working either. I installed everything, everything looks fine, but I can't get past the "not installed properly

prompt."

One source of problem is the clip is in no way, shape, or form tight on the 68000, it keeps popping off.

I'll be darned if I'm going to pay someone to solder it on.

There are too many reports here of units being soldered and still not working (after a \$60 or so ADDITIONAL EXPENSE!). Not to mention machines being damaged in the process.

This is real garbage. I should be allowed to use the "s" word here, Avant Garde deserves it. The unit does not work as advertised period. In my opinion, this is fraud.

I'm sending the unit back tomorrow. If I do not get a refund pronto, this will become a mail fraud matter.

What really gauls me is that Avant=Garde knows that virtually no boards are working, they've admitted that here, yet they seem to go on shipping boards that, apparently are no better than the boards they shipped before? What does that mean? As long as they ship something they can access another \$154?

As far as I am concerned, Avant-Garde owes me more than \$154. How about all the money I've wasted here on Genie following and anticipating this piece of garbage???

Well, here is one poor consumer who feels he has gotten the shaft.

Darn!

DOUG.W; posts,

W.C. Jenkins, my dictionary defined Fraud as "deception deliberately practiced." I think you'd have a tough time proving that Avant Garde did this deliberately.

--Doug

R.LOWREY; posts,

Well, I received my PCDII today. I haven't installed it yet, as I am waiting for my EE friend to come over and assist. I'll let you know what happens, but from the likes of the messages here, it doesn't look very promising to me.

I will say that without even trying it, the 68K "clip" looks pretty hokey to me--I realize that with our 68K's soldered in, AG had little choice, but this looks like trouble to me. Hoping I'll have the 2nd one that works,

Robert L.

NEVIN-S; posts,

Robert, some other GEnie fellow has his working (saw a message here a few days ago) so you would be number 3..! <grin>

I do not know if/why Bill is still shipping. I am in NYC and he is in Florida. Oh well. Hopefully he will drop by here soon and fill us all in on what is going on.

--Nevin

DON.WYMAN; posts,

I just joined the DOA club. I got my DITTO-II today and have the same problems as everyone else. It asks for a Dos disk and goes into never-never land. The drive spins a couple of times and just lays there. I haven't even started to figure out how to find room for this monster. I have a 1040ST that requires removing the drive in order to get the RF shield off. Is this thing supposed to fit under the RF shield? I had to bend the pins of the clip inward on one side to get it to stay on the 68000. I tried to find the upload of the programs just in case it was in the software but couldn't find it. Does anyone know where it is? Sad but still hoping.

Don Wyman

DAVESMALL; posts,

This is really sad. I feel for both "sides" here because I was involved in a similar mess when the Translator One first shipped. A hundred went out, probably 90 came back as "bad".

So, it turns out the HP MIDI chips weren't up to spec on some ST's. And there was ringing on the write-data line. And and and and...

Eventually kinda sorta, we got the Translator working; the final ROM version, which would have fixed formatting for many drives, was never done. By then, I was gone from dP.

I feel sorry for Bill that it's turned out this way, and ask you all not to let this "avalanche". He's an honorable guy; I've seen it many times. Give him a chance to straighten things out, and I feel sure he will.

Making the transition from tested prototypes to fullscale production is just awful, and Bill got burned by it, clearly. I've had it happen too -- I had to desolder lots of HP chips that were under spec, for instance. The GCR,knock wood, was trouble free, but that was my second try at reading Mac disks.

I know some of you are frustrated beyond belief, but hang on a bit. My guess would be Bill's not on GEnie not because he won't take the heat, but because he's working his tail off resolving the problem. Similar things happen here in a crisis, too.

Other products arrived with bugs, too, as you'll see elsewhere online. They're cleaned up.

So give him time. He's shown us what he can do; he needs time to do it. I don't think he would keep shipping known bad boards; he might have shipped a large batch of bad boards *all at once*, and be getting a bad rap.

Just from what I know of him personally, I would be very hesitant to even return money on a PCDII. He knows what he's doing; give him a chance to fix this mistake, and I bet he comes out with a good, clean one.

-- Just my two cent's worth.

-- thanks, Dave / Gadgets

J.ALLEN27: posts,

I'd like to second Dave's feelings, I have seen it work and it is a really nice Pc emulator. I don't understand the size and many just won't be able to use it but I think Bill will come through. I have talked to him and he seems to be hot on the trail. It seems all the boards shipped...almost all... are just fine. It is somekind of difference in the circuit in different STs that is the root of our troubles. He tested a bunch of "bad" boards in working machines...1040s like Nevins...and they work fine. There is some difference between those systems and other STs that is screwing up the process.

Apparently, and a look at the scope confirms, the PCDII is not "crashed" when it freezes on the DOS boot. The V30 is in control but the transfer mechanism used to switch between 68000/V30 is not working right. It may be as simple as the pullup resistors used in different machines. But with the V30 running OK it is not somekind of major timing screwup like not being synchronized with RAM timing, etc. When he ask me if I thought he should go up and spend daily periods online I said...NO. It made more sense to nail down what's wrong and have good news rather than come by each day and get dumped on. I think the unit returns and this mess in general has he and Ginnie pretty bummed. I'd give him another week before looking for blood. I also think the first thing he needs to do is send a unit across town to CPU NewsWire/STReport and let them do a review so someone in the press can get a solid, hands on look see, and report back impartially.

What AG is going through is a HW developers worse nightmare, mostly his fault, but a nightmare. A feel really bad for him, and any developer that tries so hard to put out a nice product and gets into trouble. It's not like the aren't trying and are sitting back counting our money planning a good vacation, this market has been their lives for years now. This is where they make their living and you just don't #\$%@ in your own backyard. Dave had no trouble, I had some trouble, and AG is in trouble...no black and white, all gray scale. Just like life.

Above, we presented a number of online posts, (open letters), from obviously concerned individuals who were kind enough to present both viewpoints; that of the highly vulnerable customer and the

developer/manufacturer. When all the smoke clears, the bottom line is still evident, that the customer; (a)- comes first, and (b)- must be kept abreast of the developments in this situation. We strenuously disagree with the premise that the online presence or the obvious lack of this presence is justifiable. If anything, an online presence would undoubtedly place many minds at ease....

In fact, a simple statement expressing;

"Shipment of all units has been suspended pending the discovery and rectification of the apparent problem, as soon as this problem is corrected shipment of PC-DITTO II will resume in earnest."

But no.... shipments go on as if there is nothing the matter. Why? And why is the statement being made to visitors amidst the floor to ceiling stacks of PC-DITTO II that are being packed and shipped by Bill and his family, (Wife, Mom and Dad) that the major cause of his problems is Atari? Also why is this board for PC-DITTO II so big? We feel Bill should be searching for the problem with the units and NOT shipping any more until is recognized and fixed.

We have the opinion that Bill Teal will eventually come through for his trusting customers and as such, for those with the fortitude for patiently waiting then this is, of course the only way to go. For those who simply must have an MS Dos emulator yesterday, then by all means, take the steps necessary to accomplish your goals. Complaining and posturing veiled or direct threats does nothing but bring forward the alarmists and doomsayers. The hardware business is quirky at best and at times the results are less than disappointing. Ask Atari. <grin> Over the course of the next few weeks we are sure to see this problem situation alleviate itself through the discovery of the cause and I might add, its sure to be corrected.

Another in the long list of those who care enough to comment....

RE: AVANT-GARDE'S UNFORGIVABLE CUSTOMER RELATIONS

I just thought I would bring you and everyone else up-to- date on what I consider a very disturbing policy by Avant-Garde. Let me begin by saying that I believe that Avant-Garde has created a superior ST product in PC Ditto and PC Ditto II. However, their policy toward their past customers is like a garbage dump in July. In other words, it stinks.

Case in point:

I purchased PC Ditto long before PC Ditto II was released. However, I neglected to register my copy with Avant-Garde by their "Upgrade deadline" (a deadline I was unaware of though I visit several local Atari dealers very regularly). I of course thought that upgrades would start when the improved product was released which would be the intelligent though incorrect assumption.

When I wrote Avant-Garde to find out how to upgrade my copy of PC Ditto to PC Ditto II, I received a rude reply from a Mrs. Ginny Teal. She told me that Avant-Garde ended their upgrade policy on June 30th 1989 (approximately 7 months before PC Ditto II actually began to ship). She said that they had only offered an upgrade on a temporary basis. For

their loyal customers who had missed that deadline their upgrade policy was as follows: "Go down to the store and buy a new one at full price." She furthermore made the absurd claim that honoring their upgrade policy would mean that Avant-Garde would never be able to make a profit and that their dealers would all abandon them. She also claimed that I had probably purchased PC Ditto just to try to get a discount on PC Ditto II...Not at all true, but even if I had what would it matter. One would always expect to be able to upgrade a product like this.

Apparently Avant-Garde cares little about their loyal customers. They are more than willing to take your money, but don't expect them to return that loyalty in any way. PC Ditto is still being sold by all the local dealers and I still see it in all the mail order ads. These dealers should put up a sign that warns customers not to buy PC Ditto because Avant-Garde is coming out with PC Ditto II and not allowing people to upgrade.

I called Avant-Garde in December of 1988 to find out when PC Ditto II was to be released. The person I spoke to in customer support told me that it would be on the market in February of 1989. I think that the entire idea of having a deadline for upgrades is a ridiculously poor policy, but I only missed Avant-Garde's upgrade deadline by less than 60 days. They missed their release date by nearly a year.

It is certainly not a matter of money that prompts this letter, it is my outrage at Avant-Garde's terrible customer support. I am a professional business consultant. I make my living teaching businesses how to operate more successfully and profitably. Avant-Garde's customer "support" would receive a failing grade.

Bill Jurinjak

LATE ARRIVAL

=====

Fri Jan 26, 1990
AVANTGARDE; posts,

We haven't read all the e-mail and messages yet, but we wanted to give you an update of where we are.

First, all of the pc-ditto II boards we have shipped have been burned in before being shipped. However, when the boards were installed by users, they failed to boot up. So, we know the boards are OK. Thus, we felt the problem was related to the machine hardware.

Since we learned of this last week, we purchased five 1040 STs. Four had the same problem as users had (DOS would not boot), but a fifth worked. We compared all the machines. This is what we found:

1. The machines are Rev.1; different from what we have seen before (and the schematics for the 1040 differ as well).
2. We swapped all the socketed chips between the working 1040 and a non-working 1040. The working 1040 still continued to work. Consequently, the socketed chips (GLU,MMU,DMA) are not affecting pc-ditto II.
3. The working 1040 has the video shifter soldered in, whereas the

remaining four non-working 1040s had socketed video shifters. (Furthermore, the other machines in our stable which work have soldered video shifters).

4. It doesn't make sense that the shifter should be the culprit, but we did take a non-working 1040, removed the video socket, and soldered the shifter. The machine still worked, but the pc-ditto II continued to fail.
5. We also replaced the 373 and 244 buffer chips with AS parts, but to no improvement.

In the past couple of days, we learned that we could disable our interrupts, and everything works fine (DOS boots). And, we have determined that the failure is due to a timing difference between various machines. In collaboration with Jim Allen at FAST Technologies, he concurs with our analysis of the hardware differences so far.

It appears that the fix will be nothing more than a software update (to change the timings), which will be uploaded to this network the moment we work it out. In any event, we are close on the heals of finding this bug very shortly and getting a fix to everyone who needs it.

We'll be back online with the good news in the next few days.

Thanks for your patience.

Avant-Garde

EDITOR NOTE;

Lookin' good Bill but one thing is painfully missing, what about all the folks who own and use the Mega style Atari computer, you make no mention of one at all.... There are three (3) available here for testing at our facilities. And, we are certain, there are many anxious users waiting to hear if the Mega units will get along with PCD II considering the Blitter.

> CALAMUS - ISD Sales CPU/STR Featureâ ª Good things are on the way.....
=====

from Nathan Potechin of ISD

One element remains constant in the history of printing, despite all the changes and upheaval; the effort to improve the quality of reproduction and to increase the flexibility of the layout. During the first step-up from hand-written originals to typeset printed editions,

the easier distribution of books and flyers stood in the foreground as a distinct advantage of various methods of reproduction. While in principle nothing has greatly changed since then, an inked matrix colors the paper that passes through, the publishing technology of the twentieth century has rapidly developed since then. The traditional lead printer was replaced by the typesetter, which in turn was replaced by the method of cathode-ray beams, and which was finally replaced by the laser imagesetter, which represents today's state of the art method.

In the course of this development the typesetting process has also gone through many changes, from hand setting with a composing stick, to key in photoprinting commands, to the current method of using a computer terminal for word processing. The methods have become much more automated and unfortunately as a consequence also much more abstract. It is no longer immediately clear what a coded command sequence has to do with, for example, a right justified paragraph.

Shortly following the rise of the personal computer a new typesetting method was introduced. "What you see is what you get" (abbreviated as "WYSIWYG") is the promise of the new layout and printing programs which allow the user to see the end product of his work on the monitor while he is still involved in the creating process. This allows the computer to carry out enough working operations so that many corrections and subsequent treatments are no longer necessary. The document is created alone on the desktop. This process is therefore called Desktop Publishing, or DTP for short. Ever since Desktop Publishing has expanded beyond the normal computer output possibilities into the field of laser imagesetters, it has become of increasing interest to professionals.

Unfortunately, it became apparent that the WYSIWYG system was not as good in practice as in theory. On some machines, for example, the typesets looked somewhat different when printed with a laser printer than they looked on the monitor, and their appearance changed again when printed with imagesetters. Sometimes hair-thin lines were not printed precisely. The key to these problems lay within the applied technology. The DTP concept came into being in a time when interface processing between the computer and periphery equipment was very slow and when computer memory space was very expensive and therefore hardly measured. In order to save time and memory space, the documents were sent to the printer in compressed form. This led to a record language which allowed the computer and printer to agree upon the layout of a page. As this language became standardized, it was possible to equip automatic imagesetters with a special computer to translate this language, the so called "Raster Image Processor" (RIP). The user was then able to theoretically hook up any computer with any printer as long as they both understood the same language.

In practice, however, the situation was not this simple. Subtle differences in the language, "dialects", began to develop that sometimes led to difficult outputs. In addition, since each computer, printer and imagesetter has its own typesets, its handling became even more difficult and misunderstandings more common. And finally, most DTP programs could not or could only partially show complicated layouts on the monitor (for example, letters in different sizes or text set on a diagonal). At its best you had "WYSIAWYG" ("What you see is almost what you get"). It was necessary to output many test prints and continually add corrections before the final copy was produced.

All of these problems led us to use a completely new starting point in the conception of Calamus. Calamus has the entire output logic built into

the program itself. Thus, the output devices no longer have anything to do with the processing of the documents. They receive the finished layout of each page as a bitmap, and a bitmap cannot be falsified. In addition, the bitmap output requires minimal claim from the output device. A large memory or special processor is no longer necessary. This saves money! However, because the amount of data to be processed is so large, much more efficient interfaces are required.

Therefore, Calamus works primarily with DMA transfer. In order to make it compatible with the LINOTYPE imagesetter the Calamus LI2 Interface was developed, which also uses the DMA Interface. It doesn't matter to Calamus whether the bitmap is sent to an imagesetter or to a monitor. That's why the monitor can show the document in exactly the same form as that which will later come from the imagesetter.

The advantage for the user: it is possible to photo print any complex document right away. Without a single test copy and without risk.

Calamus marks the beginning of a new generation of DTP use in the professional field.

-----*-----

> DynaCADD CPU/STR Featureâ ¢ The Beginning... First in series.

=====

DynaCADD is the next generation in Computer Aided Design and Drafting.

Fully interactive 2D and TRUE 3D Capabilities.
All calculations are accurate to 16 decimal places.
Math Coprocessor support
Extremely user friendly GEM Icon based interface.
Uses Pull Down menus, mouse, keyboard and function keys.
Macro keys
Command Line Interpreter
Online context sensitive documentation
On Screen command help line
Outstanding Moniterm support

3D View Capabilites

Multiple 3D views can be opened and modified at anytime. Geometric Coordinate Planes (GCP) can be changed instantly. Translation of 3D coordinate planes. Work can be done in any combination of views with all views updating constantly. Automatic generation of any orthographic view including user defined auxiliary views. Entities can be selectively hidden in any view thus allowing easy generation of orthographically sound views.

Dimensioning

Auto Dimensioning features:

Mechanical and Architectural formats.
Full 2D and 3D Dimensioning.
Absolute control over dimensioning extents and text.

Optional modification of dimension text.
True horizontal and vertical base line and chaining.
Circular Radius, diameter and enter line.
Automatic linear and angular tolerancing in any of 3 different styles.
Text orientation using any one of the three different systems
(unidirectional - angled - aligned)
Dimension text precision can be set from 0 - 9 decimal places.

Line Weights and Styles

Three line weights for use with all entities and visual representation both on the screen and through the output. Up to sixty four user definable line styles can be selected.

This is the first of an anticipated 10 - 15 segments covering all the different aspects of DynaCADD 1.70

> Stock Market ~ CPU NewsWireâ ¢
=====

THE TICKERTAPE

by Michael Arthur

Concept by Glenn Gorman

Atari Stock went down 3/8 of a point on Monday, and was up 3/8 of a point on Tuesday. On Wednesday it was down 1/4 of a point, and Atari Stock went down 1/8 of a point on Thursday. On Friday, it was down another 1/4 of a point. Finishing up the week at 8 1/4 points, Atari stock is down 1/2 of a point from the last report.

Apple Stock is at the same price it was on Friday, January 15, 1990.
Commodore Stock is up 1/4 of a point from 1/15/90.
IBM Stock is up 3/4 of a point from 1/15/90.

Stock Report for Week of 1/15/90 to 1/19/90

STock	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Reprt	Last	Chg.	Last	Chg.	Last	Chg.
Atari	8 3/8	- 3/8	8 3/4	+ 3/8	8 1/2	- 1/4
	8 3/8	- 1/4	8 3/8	- 1/8	8 1/4	- 1/4

'Sls' refers to the # of stock shares that were traded that day.
'CBM' refers to Commodore Corporation.

> FTL ONLINE CONFERENCE CPU/STR Featureâ ¢ FTL'S Wayne Holder ..
=====

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January, 24, 1990

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

On behalf of the Atari ST Roundtable, I welcome all of you to the FTL RealTime Conference on GEnie. Before getting started, I invite all of you to join us next week for an RTC with Lauren Flanegan-Sellers. Lauren is the president of Blue Chip International and will be with us to talk about WORDFLAIR, the new document processor for the Atari ST.

And now, let's commence with the FTL RTC.

For those of you who are new to computing or have been in remote seclusion for the last two years, FTL is the producer of one of the most sophisticated and popular games for the ST and Amiga (and soon, the PC), DUNGEON MASTER. It is very rare for one game to fire the imagination and enthusiasm of players the way that DUNGEON MASTER has. It is almost a cottage industry unto itself with hint books, hint disks, maps, and an unending amount of online chatter between players trying to help each other finish this game. DUNGEON MASTER has done this. And now, it has spawned a sequel. After much anticipation amongst DM fans, FTL has released CHAOS STRIKES BACK for the ST. CHAOS STRIKES BACK is proving that sequels aren't always a pale shadow of their successful predecessors! <grin>

Our guests are Wayne Holder, President of FTL, Doug Bell, and David Simon.

Gentlemen, my thanks to you for being with us this evening. Before we start throwing questions at you, would you like to introduce yourselves and make any opening comments?

<FTL>

Greetings everyone. And, thanks for the great response to Chaos Strikes Back I'm not much at introductions, so I guess that's all.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

DUNGEON MASTER has been a tremendously popular game. And it looks like CHAOS STRIKES BACK is no slouch when it comes to popularity also. Did you have any idea when doing DM that this would be the case? And what do you attribute their popularity to?

<FTL>

Well, we had a "hunch" that DM would do OK. I guess because we felt we were trying to do a type of game that had never been done before. That is a game that blends real-time action with a rich environment to play in. I guess the closest analog to what we were trying to do was to create the dungeon equivalent of a "flight simulator".

With CSB we were trying to build upon our game "technology" and develop ways to develop new scenarios without needing changes to a lot of code. In this sense, CSB was a bit of an experiment, and we were a bit nervous about releasing it. Originally we intended to make CSB require the original DM game (hence the comment on the back of the box which we had already printed bookoo thousands of before we changed our minds.) This would have limited CSB to the original graphics. But, after testing, we decided that we needed to add new monsters and other graphics. So, we went with two disks.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

DM and CSB each came out much later than everyone thought they would. Obviously, you didn't compromise the integrity of these games by trying to meet expected release dates. But why does it take so long to get a new game out, especially with CSB, seeing that the basic game mechanics had already been worked out previously (in DM)?

<FTL>

The basic CSB scenario was done quite a while ago. But, we were also working on moving Dungeon Master to many new computers. During this conversion we kept finding problems with compatibility between CSB (which was being designed on the Atari) and these new computers. Because we didn't want to dig ourselves into a hole with these new computers, we had to do a lot of redesign to plan for everything fitting in the future. In the long run, I think everyone will benefit more, even if it perhaps is a bit frustrating for our users sometimes. (were sorry!)

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

Thanks. One last one from me (for now). Which computer systems are DM and CSB available/to be available on?

<FTL>

Currently in the USA Dungeon Master is available for the Atari ST,

the Amiga, and the Apple IIgs. In Japan, Dungeon Master is available on CDROM for the Fujitsu "FM Towns" computer (a 386 IBM PC style computer.) the Sharp X68000 computer, and the NEC PC-9801 computer (just shipping next week.) Soon DM will be out for the IBM PC in the USA and also the Apple Macintosh (although perhaps not as soon for the Mac.) For CSB, it is currently only available for the Atari ST (because we like you.) but will soon be out for the Amiga.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

And we like -you- too! Thanks.

<JRHARRIS>

Thanks, Jeff, and thanks to FTL for two great games two quickies. Even though I haven't finished CSB, yet, when can I expect the next sequel and can we please have a 'multiple save' feature?

<FTL>

We hope to have at least another game out this year, but I can't say much more because I'm not sure which of the several games we have in development will come out when. Actually, I'd like to get some more feedback on whether people would like another "expansion set" like CSB And, if it should be "harder" or "easier" than CSB?

Sorry, I forgot about your "save" question. We've received many requests for this and we'll look into supporting it for future games. (Wayne looks left toward Doug Bell who will have to code it :)

<[Chris] C.MCKINSEY>

Do you plan on making a][gs version of CSB and if so when may we expect it's release?

<FTL>

Currently, we're not sure about the IIgs. We lost our IIgs expert last year and we have not yet found a good replacement for him. However, we are very pleased with our IIgs sales and we'd "like" to do a IIgs version.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

BTW, JRHARRIS votes for a "three-quel" to DM. <grin>

<[JimR] J.RATKOS1>

Now that Atari has been shipping ALL their units with D/S drives do you foresee that your products in the future will take advantage of this, if not just to "add" more sounds, graphics for those with 1meg or more and to speed up loading time?

<FTL>

Well, this is a difficult question, because my intelligence indicates there are still quite a few single sided systems out there I don't think we can abandon them. Especially since many are in Europe where we have great sales. But, I understand your desire to take full advantage of your computer. We have considered going to multiple disks and supporting a double-sided or hard disk install, but there are still some unresolved technical problems with this.

<J.RATKOS1>

I think that the way that it has been done in the past is

agreeable to most of us but there are some of us who will always want more <grin>, and yes to another expansion set.

<FTL>

BTW, I am online about once a week. Please post your votes on how you'd like an expansion set to be.

<[Jeff] JBEADLES>

First of all, Yes to another expansion set. Two questions.

First, are there plans to allow DM/CSB to be installed on hard disks, and second, are there plans for user-created adventures, ala Oids?

<FTL>

Currently, we can't support installation to a hard drive and still run on a 512K ST. We have to take complete control of the machine at boot to recover enough RAM from the system. So, we have these hard choices again. Usually, we opt for the answer that gets our games into the hands of the most people. Although, we are working on ways to make this work for future games.

Sorry. Again I forgot your second question. We have plans to slowly introduce the elements of a complete user configurable game. However, there are still many technical questions to solve. What we will do is to continue to add new pieces to the puzzle. For example, the Champion Portrait Editor is an example of a module which gives you a little more control for customizing your games. Look for more modules like this in the future.

<MIKE-ELLIS>

First I would like to commend you for producing (in my opinion) two of the best games I have ever seen. However, I was disappointed when I found that the Amiga version was better in that it supported many more sounds, etc. My question is this, "Why didn't the ST version of CSB support these enhancements?

<FTL>

Well the Amiga version requires more RAM than the ST version. (1 meg vs 512K.) Also, the Amiga has special sound hardware which the older STs lack. However, we are planning on supporting the new STe machines which have great sound hardware. The sounds on the ST are currently very difficult to do without slowing down the game. With the new hardware on STe we can add some optional sounds for the new machines to use.

<T.KURILLA>

Hello, I've just about completed CSB, but I want to solve it with the CSB characters. Is there a way to obtain both Kazai and Lor? And if so, could I get a hint?

<FTL>

No, sorry, they don't like each other very much and we had to separate them so that they wouldn't fight all the time.

<[Vinny] SALVIUS>

Thanks, Jeff. You guys had discussed the possibility of taking the DM code and turning it into scenarios other than fantasy. What do you have in the works? A space Station futuristic type thing perhaps?

<FTL>

Yes! Perhaps. We have a futuristic game in development now. Please send me your thoughts on the regular board. Perhaps you can influence what we do?

<D.BIXLER1>

First let me say. As a programmer, I have much admiration for the people at FTL. It must be absolutely fun working on games such as DM in stead of EXCITING business packages. Now the two questions:

1) As a programmer, I would think that a good way to create a different feel and "quick" game generation would be to create libraries which contain the "frames" necessary for displaying different objects, monsters, WALL TYPES, etc. (As far as I know you may already do this). Do you think that doing so could help create the sequels quicker, and at the same time make a world of difference in the look and feel of the sequels? (All you would have to do is edit the libraries and select the objects/ monsters which will be used in the next software release)

<FTL>

Sigh, I wish that creating a new game was as simple as hacking new code. The hard part always turns out to be the "details" which everyone enjoys so much. (Except sometimes the programmers.)

<D.BIXLER1>

2) As a user, I have heard NOTHING (0) about CSB, can you tell me what the major differences are from DM (What is the Champion Portrait Editor)?

<FTL>

OK. CSB continues the original DM adventure. In CSB you discover that Chaos has foreseen his defeat in the DM scenario, and has planned a revenge upon the world, which, if successful, will restore him to power. CSB is based mostly on the DM code, but adds several new modules on a separate "utility" disk. One is the Champion Portrait Editor which can pluck Champions from one saved game, allowing you to edit their appearance, and then insert them into the new CSB scenario. Also, you can use the CPE to edit the pictures of Champions in any DM or CSB game while the game is in progress. The second new feature is the "Hint Oracle" which is a powerful deity (named "John") who can read your saved games for CSB and offer specific hints on your current situation.

<F.KISH1>

Anything to speed up booting????? Perhaps a key disc in drive A for Hard Disc users (even at extra sigh, cost??)

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

This was really covered earlier. Anything else to add to this issue, Wayne?

<FTL>

No, except that we are sorry it takes so long to load. But, there is a lot of stuff to load.

<L.HUNNEFIELD>

Hi FTL! I just wanted to say thanks for the games you have produced thus far. I was curious if you were ever going to do a Sundog II?

<FTL>

We might. I assume you'd like it?

<L.HUNNEFIELD>

Absolutely. Preferably with a Dungeon-Master-like interface and graphics. That was a GREAT game!!!

<FTL>

One thing I mention from time to time, is to suggest that people write us (us the PO box in the front of the manual.) We read every letter and so do the programmers and game designers. This helps us get a "feel" for what people want.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

For everyone's information, the DM topic is in Category 9, Topic 39...

<FTL>

Yes, I am active in cat 9

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

...and the CSB topic is in Category 9, Topic 38. And Wayne's email address is. ..FTL! Gee, that works out great!

<[Brian] B.LOSCHIAVO>

In DM, which is the best combo of characters to complete the game?

<FTL>

Actually, it's mostly up to you regardless of who you choose, your characters will advance far beyond their starting stats before you get even halfway into DM. I normally say that reincarnation is better in the long run, but makes for a tougher start. If you can get past level 4 (the worms) with reincarnated Champions, then you're probably home free.

<[love broker] J.DOTSETH1>

Hi Wayne, thanks for the great games, two quickies first, is there any talk of supporting MIDI on future games and what do you have to say about the anti-climax rumors going around??

<FTL>

Sorry, do you mean MIDI for music? And clarify "anticlimax".

<[love broker] J.DOTSETH1>

O.K. MIDI as a sound track in the background and people have said the game is very anti-climatic at the end, I think they want their monitor to melt or something.

<FTL>

With regard to Midi. We may support more music options in the future. But so far it doesn't seem to be requested very often. With regard to the ending. I suppose we suffer from the fault that we put all of our effort into the scenario rather than a fancy ending animation. This is a difficult choice. We understand that after you've put in 70 plus hours you're expecting a really amazing ending. However, to live up to most peoples' expectations would probably require a second disk. (DM and CSB are tough acts to follow.)

<[Eric] E.WEEKS>

Although I would be one of the first to buy an expansion set, there are times when those old dungeon walls seem a bit dreary. Question: what is the status of the character extractor utility? I hope you still bury the character information in the extracted file so no one can find it.

<FTL>

I have assigned the task to one of our programmers. I hope to have it completed in about a week. (see cat 9 top 38 for details.)

<[DARK_ELF] K.WELTY>

I was wondering if you ever considered the option of offering the ability to link multiple computers together (MIDI or RS232) to create a true multi-player version?

<FTL>

Yes, we actually did a multiplayer game a while ago, but we never released it. Watch this space...

<[Al] A.HORTON>

I hope my question is not redundant. Three people in my home play CSB. I would love to back it up, but can't. Is there a way that key disks, doc copy protection, or code wheels could be used as copy protection?

<FTL>

Actually, we think our current protection is less hassle than a code wheel or manual based protection. Also, we do offer a backup disk as a mail-in offer. (see the front of the Manual.)

<[Ralph] ST.REPORT>

Just wanted to say "Thank You" for many hours of first rate entertainment derived from DM/CSB.

<FTL>

Thank you!!

<L.HUNNEFIELD>

Well, I just wanted to know when you will be printing a "hint booklet" for the CSB.

<FTL>

We're considering it. What specially would you like? Send me your thoughts in cat 9.

<J.RATKOS1>

You mean there is still hope for RVP? (fond memories of CES '87)

<FTL>

No, sorry. But something new is a brewin...

<[kiwi] J.CLARKE6>

When will you release CSB to the South Pacific, ie New Zealand?

<FTL>

You mean you don't have it?

<[kiwi] J.CLARKE6>

Not even close.

<FTL>

Well, I'll check into this. If you like you can order direct.
call USA <FTL> (619) 453-5711 and ask for Silvia or Debbi.

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

Thanks everyone for all your questions. Wayne, any closing
comments before we pull the plug?

<FTL>

Thank you all for attending!!! And, talk to me in cat 9 top 38.
See you all later!

<[Sysop] JEFF.W>

Thanks again to Wayne Holder, Doug Bell, and David Simon from FTL
for being with us.

Please join us next week for the Wordflair RTC with Lauren
Flanagan-Sellers.

> CPU NEWSWIRE CONFIDENTIAL ¢ Sayin it like it is....

=====

- Los Angeles, CA. ***** MAC LAPTOP CHOKES ON MIDI SW! *****

By the time you read this, the 50,000 piece order of Mac Laptops
should have reached Cupertino or should I say the CANCELLATION of that
order and the notice thereof WILL have reached Cupertino. It seems a
certain alert individual asked that a program or two be shown on the MAC
LAPTOP at NAMM, thus placing the Mac rep in the hot seat, he exclaimed
that there was a problem in the circuit design that would not allow midi
software to run using the laptop.... The individual who asked to see the
software run was given a Cross Pen and Pencil set by the grateful folks
from the music house who had ordered 50,000 laptops. They are currently
looking very carefully at the Stacy Midi controller. Yep, that's the name
folks and its claim to fame is it is the only laptop midi-controller in
the industry with 2-4mb of power ram available for the musicians.

- Sunnyvale, CA.

***** AUSTERITY AT ITS BEST? *****

Seems Atari has decided to force its users to fund AT&T unjustly. Oh
well. Perhaps after throwing away \$100,000,000 to \$300,000,000 on a dead
electronics chain, (Federated, you don't have \$750 for five 2400 baud

modems. Don't tell me, are the "cheaps" creeping back into the hallowed halls of Sunnyvale?

- Sunnyvale, CA.

***** NEW MONITORS FROM ATARI *****

They are alledged to be made by Sony and the picture quality is 1st rate. (Now throw in a trinitron tuner!) The really great part is the absolutely fantastic sound quality! The way my dealer explained it, there are now 2 speakers. One on either side of the monitor. Now the ST sound chip supports 3 voices and with this new monitor, 2 voices come out one speaker and one comes out the other. The effect is spectacular!

- Sunnyvale, CA.

***** MONOCHROME MONITORS SCARCE! *****

Hmmmm, history repeats itself... remember when the color monitors seemed to phhhft into the woodwork? Well, that's what has happened to the mono monitors this year!! WHY?? Can't our favorite fearless leaders get their act together? Or is it a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing and both thought the other took care of it??

- San Antonio, TX.

***** DEEP DISCOUNTING IS DUMB! *****

Recently, a Texas Atari dealer took the intitiative to do a mailout to special customers and friends, this mailout was for the promotion of advance sales of the Stacy it went like this..

From: STACE [Mark] at 17:23 EST

Seems our good friends at Computer Emporium are determined to be the first on the block to sell STacy at the lowest prices around...

Just retrieved a postcard from our club mailbox containing the following information:

The Atari STacy Laptop
Computer Emporium is now taking orders
for the new laptop ST from Atari.
1 meg of memory is standard.
20 meg hard drive is optional.
ORDER YOURS NOW!!

\$1129.95 with 1 meg
\$1499.95 with 1 meg/20 meg hard drive
ACT NOW!
(Quantities are limited)

Not to worry dear hearts.. Their quantities ARE limited, they have none. And, according to our discrete sources, they have only two units on order. Incidentally, it was also made known that in all probabilities, they will be hard pressed to ever recieve the Stacy machines.

While on the subject we see where good ole J & R Music is at it again.. this time we find the price most folks found so hard to believe when we

told you about it three weeks ago is now in effect. They are selling the 520 STF for \$299.95. And... they said it could never happen.

- Chicago, IL

***** STE TO BE IN POWER PACK DEALS *****

According to our sources, the STE will be the machine shipped in the power pack deals that ARE in the works. For Atari's positive marketing push in the USA. In this instance, this is the best news yet for all of us, as it means the userbase is going to grow, thus renewing developer interest all the way 'round.

- Atlanta, GA.

***** ATARI MAY NOT BE AT SPRING COMDEX? *****

Why must our favorite computer company always play games like the obviously late debutant at the 'coming out ball'. Perhaps the decision makers at Sunnyvale have forgotten the rest of the real world who are desperately TRYING to support them. These folks need to know in advance of these shows so the proper travel and accomodation arrangements may be made. Let's get off our indecisive little duffs guys and get with the promotional program! After all, this is 1990. COMDEX is the name of the game. Bar none.

How about a CEO who is present at an industry show and spends the best part of the day watching a football game instead of glad-handing and promoting the business???? Not bad.... Guess that company has all the business it can handle.

- Toronto, Canada

**** SEYBOLD & CEPS WILL MAKE ATARI DTP SHINE! ****

Sam Tramiel, of Atari Corp. has gone and done it again, in his usual fashion of seeing the silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud, he has decided to take full advantage of these shows and will have Atari's DTP systems there in force to once and for all prove to the crowds that this is the system to own. Therefore, keep your eyes open for the schedules of these shows they should be very revealing as far as Atari is concerned.

> Canadian Expo CPU/STR InfoFileâ ª Our neighbors to the north do it again!

=====

Press Release

The Second CANDIAN ATARI USERS' CONVENTION

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The largest gathering ever of Atari computer users in Canada is expected at the upcoming Second Canadian Atari Users' Convention to be held at the Airport Hilton Hotel On April 1, 1990 from 10am to 6pm.

Sponsored by the Toronto Atari Federation, one of the largest computer user groups in North America, the Convention will offer the public a once-a-year opportunity to see what is new and exciting in the world of Atari. There will be exhibits, seminars and demonstrations by a wide variety of retailers, guest speakers, user groups from Canada and the U.S., software developers and hardware manufacturers. "

Show Special" prices offered by retailers, Public Domain software from user groups and reduced room rates at the Airport Hilton ensure bargains for everyone.

A special feature will be a major exhibition by Atari Canada, where a full range of their product line, from 8-bit computers and game machines, through 1040ST's, Mega 2's, Mega 4's and PC clones will be on display.

One of the biggest draws is sure to be the recently released and widely praised Atari Portfolio, an MS-DOS compatible computer which fits in the inner pocket of a business suit and the latest new Atari STE and STacy. Other highlights include new products, several from Europe, which enable the ST line to emulate IBM and Macintosh machines quickly and more easily than ever before. The Second Canadian Atari Users Convention is being held at the Airport Hilton Hotel, located on Toronto Airport Stip, 5875 Airport Rd., Mississauga, Ontario.

For more information contact our Public Info-Line at (416) 425-5357, or the TAF On-Line BBS at (416) 235-0318

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ATTENTION ATARI USER GROUPS:

The Toronto Atari Federation, sponsor of the upcoming SECOND CANADIAN ATARI USERS' CONVENTION, is a non-profit users' group whose sole aim is to serve the Atari community in Canada. As a user group, we understand fully how attendance at computer shows can amount to a major item in the yearly budget. However, we feel strongly that user groups are key players in the world of Atari. Therefore, we are offering a special, reduced rental rate for booths to all Atari user groups. As an Atari user group, your fee will be 57% off the regular Exhibitor's Rate. That is, you pay only \$125.00 Canadian. The SECOND CANADIAN ATARI USERS' CONVENTION will certainly be the major Atari event of the year. The previous Convention was a runaway success, and we are determined to outdo ourselves in 1990. We hope that you will want to share in the excitement with us. This special offer for usergroups is subject to the availability of booths. Only one booth per user group at this special price. To ensure that your user group does not miss out, please respond as soon as possible.

For more information, please do not hesitate to call me at:

(416) 477-2085 or,

Mike Searl (TAF President) at (416) 245-5543.

* Please note that booths rented at the special reduced rate for user groups may not, in every instance, be a standard 10' x 10' due to the shape of the room.

Dear Exhibitors

The Toronto Atari Federation is pleased to announce an event of special interest to Atari dealers and user groups. The SECOND CANADIAN ATARI USERS' CONVENTION will be held on April 1, 1990 at the Airport Hilton Hotel, 5875 Airport Rd. Mississauga, Ontario.

This special event comes as a direct result of the demand, both from dealers and users, which followed the highly successful "First Canadian Atari Users' Convention," held in November, 1988. That show exceeded everybody's expectations, drawing a crowd of over 2,000 attendees in just 5 hours, generating a great deal of business for participating retailers, receiving very favourable reviews in magazines such as Antic, STart and Computer Shopper, and attracting a surprisingly large percentage of attendees from outside the Toronto area and from the United States.

A conservative estimate of attendance for the upcoming show is 3,000 attendees, making this event the largest gathering of Atari users ever in Canada. Dealers can look forward to immediate contact with a very large segment of the Atari market. For dealers this is the premium segment of the market - attendees are eager, enthusiastic and ready to make significant hardware and software purchases. Users will be drawn by a very wide variety of exhibitors and other attractions.

Exhibitors' costs will be kept as low as possible, since we are a non-profit users' group whose only aim is to serve the Atari community in Canada. Admission prices will also be kept low in order to attract the largest crowd possible.

The SECOND CANADIAN ATARI USERS' CONVENTION will feature, retailers, displays by software developers and hardware manufacturers, guest speakers conducting a day-long series of seminars in our lecture rooms, and a major exhibition by Atari Canada. The Airport Hilton Hotel is an excellent hotel with the highest reputation and first-rate convention facilities, conveniently located on the Toronto Airport Strip near several major expressways and right on the public transit system. Room rates will be specially discounted for everyone connected with the Convention.

Our promotion of the Convention will be even more dynamic and professional than in 1988, supported by a much larger budget. The advertising campaign will include major newspaper advertisements, press releases, posters, pamphlets, and a BBS campaign across North America.

If you are interested in obtaining more information on how to be an exhibitor at Canada's Atari event of the Year, please feel free to call one of the phone numbers listed below or leave mail on GENie to M.SEARL1. Booths will measure 10'x10' and will be curtained on three sides; one 8' table, draped. One Hydro outlet is included in the booth price. Power bars and extension cords are the responsibility of the exhibitor. Extra tables are also available for a nominal charge. We expect all booths to be sold well before the show date. To confirm your participation in the Second

Canadian Atari Users' Convention, please respond as soon as possible. For inquiries, do not hesitate to call me at (416) 477-2085 or Mike Searl at (416) 245-5543. A FAX number will be provided from Feb 1st to April 1st for your convenience. The number will be (416) 245-5089.

Yours truly,
Paul Collard,
Convention Coordinator
The Canadian Atari Users Convention

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